



# Creation Exploration Hike

*“Nature shares in God’s goodness, and contemplation of its beauty and richness raises our hearts and minds to God.” – USCCB: Renewing the Earth*

## Introduction

This initial hike is meant to inspire awe and wonder of God’s creation and get students excited about the environment while exploring some basic science concepts such as tree and plant identification, the water cycle, ecosystems, and energy flow. In this exploratory quest, students will encounter a variety of ecosystems through games and keen observation. Throughout the hike, students are encouraged to pause and absorb the beauty that surrounds them.

## Student Performance Objectives

Through participation in this activity students will:

- Demonstrate appreciation for the beauty and intricacy of God’s creation
- Explore various ecosystems and the interactions among organisms across these ecosystems
- Trace the flow of energy within an ecosystem using key vocabulary, such as: producer, consumer, and decomposer
- List examples of symbiotic relationships that occur within an ecosystem
- Identify species of trees, plants, insects, and animals through observation of physical characteristics
- Explain the cycle of seasons and their effect on plant and animal life
- Identify ways that humans can protect ecosystems
- Explore the effects of weathering and human consumption on creation
- Describe the process of decomposition
- Inspire wonder and awe

## Archdiocesan Standards

- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Physical Science; Energy 2
- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Life Science; From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes 1
- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Earth and Space Science; Earth’s Systems 1
- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Physical Science; Matter and Its Interactions 3
- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Physical Science; Energy 1
- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Life Science; From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes 1
- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Life Science; Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics 1
- MS-LSI-5
- MS-LSI-6
- MS-LSI-7
- MS-LS2-2
- MS-LS2-3
- MS-LS2-4
- MS-ESS2-1
- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Religion 7
- 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Religion 6, 7

## Activities

- Find the Pine Cone
  - Students will learn the importance of keen observation while looking for a pine cone that is hidden in plain sight.
- Free Exploration
  - After honing their observation skills, students will be given time to simply explore creation. Starting at a macro level, students are encouraged to get to know a designated area around them- what do they see, hear,

smell, etc.? Is it grassy, hilly, shade-covered, wet? Do they see any wildlife or evidence of wildlife? After exploring the area from a macro level, students will pick a small area to explore at a micro level. Using magnifying glasses to aid their observation, they can compare their discoveries to their initial, macro observation.

- Dozen Touches Scavenger Hunt
  - Each student will be given a “secret” adjective such as soft, prickly, etc. and will go on a quest to find items that match their adjective. Each student will receive an egg carton to hold their items, and all egg cartons will be passed around at the end of the activity for the other students to guess what the adjectives were.
- What’s in the Bag Guessing Game
  - Using only their sense of touch, students will take turns reaching into a bag with a hidden object and saying one adjective to describe the item. After 3 clues are given, the other students will try to guess what is in the bag, based on the descriptive language used by their classmates.
- The Fallen Log
  - Students will examine decomposing tree stumps, documenting the various plants and animals they discover. During the investigation, students will brainstorm the answers to questions such as “How might the tree have died?” and “How long has the tree been dead?” and look for evidence to support their responses.